



## Delegates of the third FCAA Congress enjoy a evening immersed in Aruba culture

Aruba hosted over June 14, 15, & 16 the Third congress of the Federation of Caribbean Associations of Architects. During that time over 100 delegates from the Caribbean and the U.S. enjoyed informative lectures from noted figures in the world of tourism and architecture and entertaining evenings that showed them something of Aruban island life.

On Thursday, the delegates were treated to a “cultural evening” at Fort Zoutman, Aruba’s most historic building, which houses a small museum, and gave the visitors a true taste of the old Aruban traditions. Caress Ecury acted as Mistress of Ceremonies as delegates munched on authentic Aruba delights such as fish cakes and pan bati, and enjoyed folkloric dancers demonstrating an island waltz and the Tumba. Maybelline Arends and her singers, including noted baritone Edjean Semeleer performed a medley of Aruban and Caribbean songs, and Caress recited a poem by Nidia Ecury to the backdrop of percussion by the local group Sonfia.

Myrna Jansen, Director of the Aruba Tourism Authority was the guest speaker for the night, and began her address by teaching the visitors two important phrases in Papiamentu, “*Bon Nochi*,” Good Evening, and “*Bon Bini*,” Welcome. Ms. Jansen expressed the hope that the congress had surpassed the expectations of the delegates, and that they had had the chance to experience the island and know the people. She then extolled the benefits of tourism to the world, on many levels. She stated, “for most countries enjoying tourism it is an important economic tool... It is one of the most significant sources of employment. It has stricken poverty from many countries and brought progress to many countries around the world. Tourism is also a celebration of cultures; it breaks barriers between countries and societies, creates understanding, respect for other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. It is an emotional experience, and we live it what is called the “experience economy.” Travel and tourism research has found that visitors in general want to experience “the soul” of the countries they visit; the people, the music, the bands, the history, the art, the literature, the monuments, the culture, the language, cuisine, and yes, the architecture.”

Since Thursday night was a “cultural night,” the visitors experienced not only varied examples of the things that Ms. Jansen described, the more traditional aspects of Aruban culture, but for a Grand Finale, which without any celebration of Aruban life would not be complete, a taste of Carnival. Dancers in costume brought a number of the audience to the floor to join them in dancing as they do in for the celebration before Lent begins, and so they were able to momentarily experience Carnival for themselves. They unanimously expressed their delight for the lively evening, a charming break from intense days of lectures and discussions, which continued the next day, the final day of the conference.